

On the day after Thanksgiving 1990, National Park Service archeologists began salvaging an archeological site believed to be a prehistoric dwelling located at the high tide line on Coast Guard Beach in Eastham. Although no laboratory work has been done, artifacts found at the site suggest that it dates from the Middle Archaic period of 6,000 to 8,000 years ago. Records show that no undisturbed site of this age has previously been found on Cape Cod. Salvage work was concluded after thirty days of continuous excavation. During this period, all of the Middle Archaic deposit on the beach was removed. Artifacts--which include stone tools and pottery fragments--will undergo further study in the laboratory, as will soil samples from which the recovery of charcoal for radiocarbon dating will be attempted. Several earthen features were demolished as successive strata of the deposit were excavated. All were measured and their exact locations recorded. The first feature discovered and excavated was a hearth that consisted of a pit into which rocks heated in a nearby fire had been placed in order to cook food. The apparent floor of a dwelling unit was marked by the presence--atop the original glacial soil--of a rich organic layer several inches deep. This layer contained few artifacts. Had this deposit resulted from the disposal of trash and garbage, it likely would have contained a number of broken and discarded tools or other artifacts. Such objects were instead found outside the perimeter of this dark deposit. Seven post molds--topsoil-filled cavities left when the buried ends of wooden posts have rotted away--also fringed this surface, suggesting where walls or supports for a roof may have stood.

The artifacts found are of little or no monetary value. They primarily are small stone chips from tool making or repair. The significance of this site lies in its undisturbed strata and the information that can be gained as artifacts are unearthed. This information may also help archeologists to decipher less complete sites in other localities.

In addition to the Middle Archaic features, artifacts dating from more recent prehistoric periods were also found. These were at higher elevations in the sand cliff above and behind the Middle Archaic site. These artifacts suggest that this location probably remained an attractive place to live for thousands of years. Exceptionally high tides during the full moon on December 2nd and 3rd undercut much of this material, which was removed in blocks and jacketed in plaster of paris. It will undergo laboratory excavation in the future. These tides had been expected to wash away the Middle Archaic deposit, but instead exposed more of it by eroding the overlying sand cliff.

Although its site was at the beachfront, this dwelling would have been at an inland location. Sea level rise and resulting erosion have brought today's shoreline several mile west of its position 8,000 years ago. A thick layer of wind-blown sand that accumulated on top of the site protected it from inadvertant disturbance and kept it from previously being detected.

The site was discovered the week before Thanksgiving by a local man whose avocation is archeology. He was walking the beach with his two children when he observed what he recognized as prehistoric artifacts that were freshly exposed by erosion. He notified Cape Cod National Seashore. The National Park Service has a commitment to preserve and protect this site. All of the archeological sites on federal land within the Seashore are protected by federal law. Penalties for a violation range up to two years in jail and fines of \$10,000.

NPS archeologists will monitor the beachfront throughout the winter, especially after storms and at periods of extreme high tides. NPS policy calls for the excavation of archeological sites only if they are seriously threatened. Rapid erosion of the shoreline threatened this site and made this salvage effort necessary. Plans for further archeological field work will be developed as needs arise.

NEWS RELEASE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

# NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Frank Ackerman  
(508) 349-3785  
Edie Shean Hammond  
(617) 223-5199

## NPS TO CONCLUDE SALVAGE OF ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE

Eastham, MA -- After thirty days of continuous excavation, National Park Service (NPS) archeologists will conclude the salvage of a prehistoric site within Cape Cod National Seashore this weekend.

Before the archeologists depart, all of the Middle Archaic deposit on the beach will have been removed. Cleanup work will continue until sometime on Monday. Artifacts--which include stone tools and pottery fragments--will undergo further study in the laboratory, as will soil samples from which the recovery of charcoal for radiocarbon dating will be attempted. Several earthen features were demolished as successive strata of the deposit were excavated. Among these features were four hearths and seven molds of posts that apparently supported a structure. All were measured and their exact locations recorded.

A test pit dug behind the cliff face indicated that the archeological deposit continues under the sand cliff behind the beach. That pit will be filled before the archeologists depart. Park rangers have been on duty continuously in order to inform visitors about the excavation during daylight hours and to protect it after dark. "The National Park Service has a commitment to preserve and protect this site," said Seashore Superintendent Andy Ringgold.

He reminds everyone that this area, and all of the archeological sites on federal land within the Cape Cod National Seashore are protected by federal law. Penalties for a violation range up to two years in jail and fines of \$10,000.

(MORE)

NPS archeologists will monitor the beachfront throughout the winter, especially after storms and at periods of extreme high tides. NPS policy calls for the excavation of archeological sites only if they are seriously threatened. "Rapid erosion of the shoreline threatened this site and made this salvage effort necessary," said Ringgold. "Plans for further archeological field work will be developed as needs arise."

Excavations have revealed a variety of features and artifacts which suggest that this is the site of a dwelling which dates from the Middle Archaic period of 6,000 to 8,000 years ago. Laboratory analysis will be needed in order to confirm the age of the material recovered. The site, which is at the level of the high tides, was first exposed in mid-November when a northeasterly storm extensively eroded the overlying sand cliff.

The thickness of the sand layer above the site has prevented it from being either detected or disturbed before now. "Geological change both protected the site in the past and revealed it to us now," said Frank Ackerman, Chief of interpretation and Cultural Resource Management for Cape Cod National Seashore. Ackerman added that when people lived at the site it was well inland, at least a few miles from the beach. Sea level rise and shoreline erosion have gradually moved the beach westward until it intersected the site.

#####



# Ancient Find Is Uncovered At Coast Guard Beach; Archaeologists Racing The Tides To Complete Dig



Working along Coast Guard Beach on Sunday. *The Cape Codder* Tuesday Nov 27, 1990



Gerry Stillson plots sample sites along the beach.

TCC/DONAHUE

## Rare Find—Continued

what is found, Mr Stillson said. Although remains are uncovered frequently on Cape Cod, many artifacts are in pieces because colonial settlers' plows have crushed them "blender" style, Mr Stillson said.

### What Were They Like?

In the Eastham find, unfarmable sand covered the site over the years, thus locking the artifacts into a protective shell.

Mr Stillson added that the Eastham site is ideal for finding artifacts which tie in directly with lifestyles of prehistoric residents, who were more advanced than many believe.

"We think that the folks who lived during this period were familiar with the available resources," Mr Stillson said. "They were also very successful at what they did. Their population was great. They probably lived here seasonally and they knew the area well."

Mr Stillson said the prehistoric settlers also probably had an extensive trade network.

"They were well aware of what was going on hundreds and thousands of miles away," he said.

Although the National Seashore excavates test pits in a



The discoverers: Allison, Dan and Jesse Carns of Orleans.

TCC/DONAHUE

number of beach and Park areas, this is the first untouched site of its kind found in Eastham. Cape Cod Museum of Natural History archaeologist Fred Dunford discovered a similar site on Run Hill Road in Brewster in 1988.

Mr Dunford's site was about 8000 years old and was fully excavated over the past two years.

According to Mr Stillson, a site similar to the Coast Guard Beach hearth and dwelling recently was found in Newfoundland.

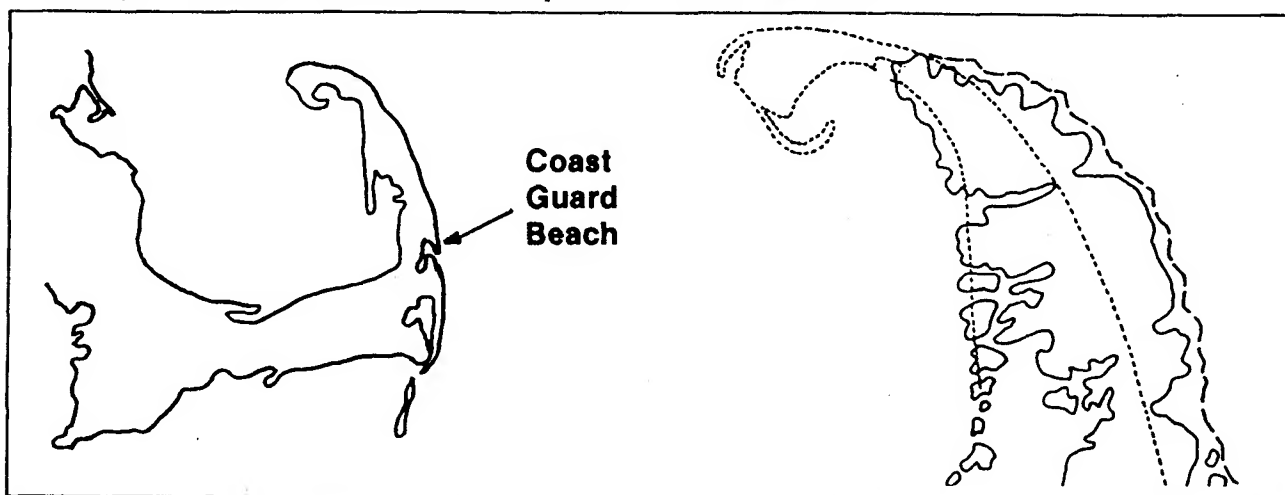
Peter Trull, the museum's educational director, said all of Cape Cod is a potential archaeological site and each time developers begin a new project, new remains are uncovered.

Mr Stillson and his team began excavating the site Friday and continued through the weekend. The archaeologists, working against the tides, will excavate until Friday or Saturday of this week.

An unusually high tide predicted for Sunday should completely wash away the remains, Mr Stillson said.

Palynologist (pollen expert) Gerald Kelso has taken samples from the site. He will extract pollen from the soil and, through microscopic examination, determine vegetation, crops grown and ecology of the area during the time period.

"This is a very exciting site," Mr Stillson said. "I feel very lucky to be doing it." □



Coast Guard Beach today (left) and two scientific thoughts on what the Cape may have looked like thousands of years ago. Dotted line shows approximate shape of Cape today. Solid lines and dashes show two views of the earlier Atlantic boundaries. Illustration at right reprinted courtesy of Parnassus Imprints from *These Fragile Outposts* by Barbara Blau Chamberlain.

The entrance into a "sealed time capsule" of life on Cape Cod more than 6000 years ago was uncovered by recent erosion on Coast Guard Beach in Eastham and now archaeologists are racing against time before expected high tides on Sunday wash everything away.

The rare find—a first for the Eastham area—was discovered when a local amateur archaeologist recognized the pre-historic remains while walking the beach with his two children the Thursday before Thanksgiving. Dan Carns of Orleans said he thought the erosion from recent coastal storms might have uncovered something interesting and so he was looking for signs of a major find.

What Mr Carns discovered was the remains of a prehistoric hearth. Thanks to the courses he had taken at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History in Brewster, he recognized them immediately and sought out archaeologists at the Cape Cod National Seashore.

Seashore scientists explored the site early last week and

## Erosion Produces Some Rich Pickin's

Recent coastal erosion has made the area beaches a fun place to "muck around" and search for archaeological remains or other oddities uncovered in the sand.

Although Mark Aitchison of Eastham said he and his friends have been out at Fort Hill searching for treasure, they haven't found much. They have only spotted a few arrowheads and a couple of fellow residents wandering the shrinking beach area, also searching for remains.

Wellfleet Health and Conservation Officer John Chatham said with recent high winds and rough water, anything could turn up on the beaches.

"Everything on this earth gets buried unless it's incinerated," he said. "It's hard to tell what you'll find."

K.G.

started excavations on Friday. That's when portions of a living structure were uncovered and pieces of the mystery of a people who lived 6000 to 7000 years ago in Eastham are slowly coming together.

The beach area under excavation was about five miles inland when prehistoric families dwelled there. Erosion and high tides are rapidly threatening the vulnerable site, which may be less than a week away from being swept out to sea.

### Unique, Intact Site

According to George Stillson, site dig director and archaeologist from the Cape Cod National Seashore, the archaeological remains are unique because the entire site has remained intact through time.

"The site was changed only by vegetation," Mr Stillson said yesterday. "The sand covered it up and the site was sealed like a time capsule."

He said the four-person team of diggers will be looking for evidence of more than one living structure, as well as how many extended families occupied the entire site.

"It's hard to tell how big it is," archaeologist Maria Capozzi said as she swept and shoveled. "The more we clean it, the more we discover."

The team is using a grid technique when excavating. Units have been identified in the 20-foot area so later, when materials from each unit are identified, scientists can determine exactly where different materials were found.

The separate layers uncovered represent different time periods, Mr Stillson said, and show the possibility of more than one family occupying the area over the centuries.

So far the team has found a prehistoric hearth, a "living floor" of a wigwam or hut, evidence of a living structure, evidence of the making and maintenance of blades and stone tools.

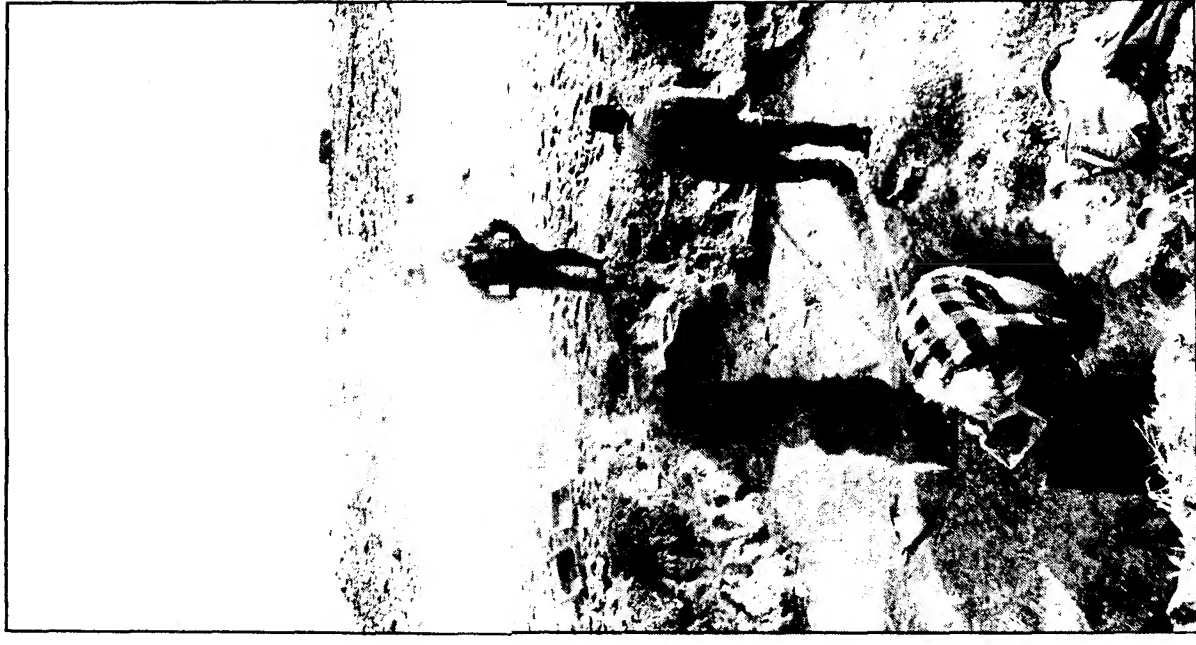
Inorganic material will be brought to the Charlestown Naval Yard laboratory and is expected to provide new knowledge on the time period.

Over the past three days, the group has worked from early morning until the tide creeps up and washes over the tarpaulin-covered site.

"We literally ran off the beach at 1:30 (pm) Friday," Miss Capozzi related.

The condition of artifacts is almost more important than

(Continued on Page Three)



Yesterday morning and another race against the tide.

TCC DONAHUE

+CC  
11/27  
p.3

# Archaeology Buff

## Dan Carns

### Had A Feeling

Three weeks ago Dan Carns and a surfing friend walked a stretch of beach. Pointing to a spot where erosion had carved out a circular area, Mr Carns mentioned to the friend that he had a feeling "something is there." As his surfing friend stood watching the excavation yesterday he said, "He was right. Just look at this."

Dan Carns, 34, an amateur archaeologist from Orleans, is no stranger to the world of archaeology. He spent many years collecting bottles before his interest in artifacts was piqued while working at construction sites where artifacts are often found while digging building foundations. Mr Carns, who often walks area beaches picking up debris, has donated the collection of his findings to the National Seashore. He recently was eyeing eroded sections of Coast Guard Beach in hopes that something unusual would catch his eye.

"It's eroded over the years," he said yesterday. "The kids and I pick up debris usually but the last storm exposed the fire pit."

Much to his surprise, all Mr Carns learned in classes at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History



(left to right) Park Service archaeologists, Freddie Dimmock, Emily Donlan and Maria Capozzi work on the site.

TCC/DONAHUE

and Cape Cod Community College came together as he stumbled upon the archaeological find two weeks ago while walking with his son Jesse, eight, and daughter, Alison, who is seven.

The initial discovery of the pre-historic hearth led to a bigger find—an entire occupation site.

"Dan recognized the pre-historic fire pit and realized the importance of it," National Seashore Archaeologist George Stillson said.

Mr Carns said he notified the National Seashore because digging it himself "would be a no-no."

He has been invited to help out with the excavation since Friday and was busy at work during a site visit yesterday.

"This is some type of a shelter or living camp as opposed to a hunting ground," Mr Carns said. "We've just started and we'll spend a week here."

He added that concentration of artifacts has increased the more the four-person team excavates.

Mr Carns said working in construction introduced him to ancient artifacts. He discovered 9000-year-old remains at a construction site in Barnstable.

"All the sites I've seen are unique in their own way," he said, adding that he has been interested in archaeology since he was a boy. "I've always loved it. I was a *National Geographic* freak."

Working with the crew at Coast Guard Beach, he said, has been a great learning experience.

"They're really professionals," he said. "It's fascinating working with these people."

K.G.



## Most significant Seashore find

# Storm exposes 7,000-year-old site

By K.C. Myers

High winds and storm waves last week uncovered the fire pit and floor of a dwelling dating back 7,000 years to mid-archaic times at Coast Guard Beach in Eastham.

George Stillson, archaeological supervisor of the Northeast branch of the National Park Service, said the unearthed spot is one of the most significant archaeological finds that "has ever come to light in this park."

Frank Ackerman, chief interpreter and cultural resource manager of the Seashore, said the results of an archaeological survey of the whole Seashore in 1979 found "literally dozens" of archaeological sites of varied significance, but most were not excavated.

That is because the only time a site is excavated on the Seashore is when it is in a spot that must be used to place a building or structure for Seashore purposes or when the site is in a place that is in danger of being destroyed by natural means, he said. This is why archaeologists from the Seashore are digging up this spot on Coast Guard beach, said Ackerman.

area is being excavated because it is one of the oldest and most extensive markings of prehistoric man found in this area, said Stillson. It was discovered the week of Thanksgiving by a beach walker who noticed an ancient fire pit exposed at the base of the dunes, which had been severely cut by high tides due to uncommonly persistent high winds, said Stillson. The walker notified Stillson who examined the fire pit the day before Thanksgiving. The next Friday, a team of six professional archaeologists began digging.

Over the weekend, as a team dug  
Continued to page 32

---

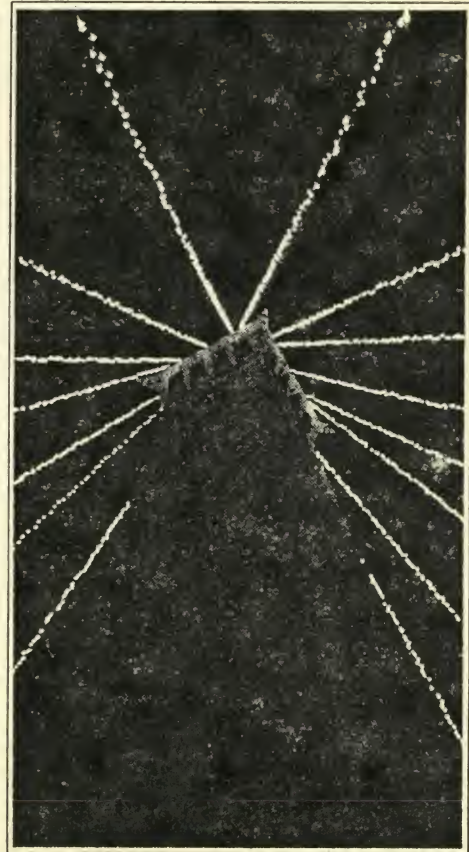
### *Another story, photo page 5*

---

The six or seven archaeologists there cannot work there at high tide because there is not enough dry land on which to move. And if a storm or an extremely high tide hits the site, it could be destroyed, said Stillson.

For this reason, Stillson said the workers are digging faster and less meticulously than normal. Tony Bonanno, chief ranger of the Seashore, said this weekend there is supposed to be the highest tide in 100 years reaching well over 12 feet. This could very well wash away the remains of the Native American dwelling, said Stillson.

But besides eminent destruction, this



*The Pilgrim Monument in Provincetown is lighted in honor of First Landing and the holidays*



Continued from page 1

around the fire pit, they uncovered a circular formation of very dark earth that is the usual size of a teepee floor. Stillson said the dark area is the remnant of decayed possessions such as cooking material and clothing that the people who had lived in that dwelling had left.

Further excavation revealed bits of stone used to sharpen tools inside the dwelling and the makings of the stone tools outside the dwelling. Stillson was able to determine that the inhabitants lived in the "middle-archaic period", 6,000 or 7,000 years ago, by dating a "projectile point" found on site. The point could be an arrowhead or knife. Although he was not sure of the use, he could determine the time period based on the materials and the technology used to make the projectile point, he said.

Besides fire-cracked stones, the floor and the bits of tools, remnants of a hide scraper were discovered. There could be a lot more in the area, said Stillson, but more digging is required. He said the team will work as long as it can to un-

cover the site. Normally, without the time constraint of destruction by high tides, a project like this would take months, he said. It may still take months, depending upon how many things are uncovered in the coming week.

"At this point we do not know if we have uncovered one dwelling or a whole village," he said.

If full excavation is undertaken the dunes behind the site that have not been washed out by the waves will have to be removed. Stillson, pointing to the distinctive dark circle about 15 square feet around, which clearly marked the dwelling floor, said, "The floor clearly goes into the undestroyed area. I would like to uncover all of it, but that would certainly encourage further erosion." Ackerman said the Seashore officials do not favor excavation unless there is no other way to preserve the artifacts.

He said it is much more conservationist and archaeologically sound to leave the sites buried because in many cases the most valuable archaeological information is the circumstances of the burial. If a site is excavated, that information is lost. He said it is important to keep archaeologically significant areas underground because modern equipment continues to improve so that it becomes more and more possible to study sites without digging them up.

This area of the Seashore in Eastham has traditionally been a popular site to find prehistoric Native American remains, said Ackerman. He emphasized that none of the sites spotted around there were originally shoreline dwellings, including this one. When the people settled, it was probably nearer to the Nauset marshes, than to the windy, harsh ocean. This discovery of inland dwellings illustrates the tremendous amount of erosion of the shoreline over the past several thousand years. Ackerman said when the dwelling was inhabited, it was at least three miles inland.

Just as today, the economics of the archaic peoples depended upon access to water, he said. But then the people settled closer to the bay near estuaries, shell-fishing and so on. Oceanfront property does not become at all prominent until the 1930s or 1940s, he said.

Although Stillson could not name the peoples of that day, he did know something about how they lived. "They were largely a hunting and gathering society pre-dating agrarian societies," he said. "They were very successful at making a living. We're not talking about savages eeking out an existence."

He also knew something about the time. About 8,000 years ago the climate was much warmer than it is now, probably the same as North Carolina is today. The sea level was also lower. It reached its present height 6,000 years ago, he said.

Ackerman said of all the dozens of ancient sites on the Seashore, none are ancient Indian burial grounds. A burial

ground was only discovered once on Indian Neck Road in Wellfleet right outside the boundaries of the Seashore. He said that rare and special discovery was made by contractors digging a well for a septic system in the backyard of a summer resident.

"They found bits of human bones with their backhoes," he said. But that is very rare occurrence; there have only been three such discoveries of that kind in New England in over 200 years, said.

Latest may be the oldest *The Advocate Thursday, Nov. 9, 1990*

# Archaeological sites in other towns

The floor of a prehistoric dwelling, including a fully intact hearth, that was uncovered last week by high tides that eroded the dunes at Coast Guard Beach in Eastham, was identified as being from the Middle-Archaic period, which dates back 7,000 years.

George Stillson, chief archaeologist for the Northeast part of the National Park Service, used a "projectile point," an object that could have been an arrowhead, or a knife, to determine that this site dates back 7,000 years or to the Middle Archaic period. "Judging from the technology used to construct the projectile point, we found the approximate date," he said.

Stillson said excavation of this archaeological site in Eastham could be very significant because there have been many sites spotted in the Eastham area before that are also significant. Stillson said of the other sites identified in this area, this one is the oldest, or at least one of the oldest.

For example, the Hemenway site in Eastham, which has been identified as a village and clam shell heap, is dated to the Woodland period, which is from 1,000 B.C. to 500 A.D. In East Orleans, the Coburn site, identified as a camp and burial grounds, is labelled as being from the Late Archaic period. In Wellfleet there is the Baylor Hill burial ground that dates back to the Late Archaic period as well.

There are several sites in Truro, including the Cabral site, the Cliff site, the Hillside site and the Holden site, all of which were identified as being from the Late Archaic or Early Woodland times. The early Woodland, Holden site included evidence of stone and ceramic industry



Advocate photo by K.C. Myers

*Dan Carns, (l.) amateur archaeologist who discovered site, helping professionals work the find*

Stillson said the site found at Coast Guard Beach, pre-dated ceramics by 3,000 years. The Cliff site in Truro, identified as Late Archaic included evidence of "lithic" or stone industry.

So far the findings at the Coast Guard Beach site are mostly bits of stone industry that Stillson said were probably parts of tools, or objects used to sharpen tools. In the hearth, or fire pit, that was first

revealed by the eroded dunes, Stillson found cracked rocks that looked as if they had been warmed and then cooked upon.

"There was no burned earth around the hearth so we suspect that the cracked rocks were heated and then put into the hearth where they were cooked on directly," he said.

The excavation of the site will continue indefinitely, said Stillson. At least until

the tide washes it away. But if unusually high tides do not destroy the possibility of uncovering the site, the archaeologists could go on digging out evidence of an earlier age for months, he said.

"The more we dig, the more we uncover," he said. So far a team of six has been working since last Friday for about eight hours a day, he said.





# Coast Guard Beach unveils artifacts of early Cape life

*Eastham Oracle  
Thurs Nov 29,  
1990*

By SUSANNA GRAHAM  
Cape Cod Newspapers Staff

Buried in layers of earth are the secrets of another time.

A time when large game wandered through deep forests, when the Cape was much shorter but much wider than today, when Europeans had not yet set foot here to lay the foundation of our nation.

Fighting the ever-changing tides and the destructive forces of erosion, Cape Cod National Seashore archeologists are excavating a dwelling site which is thousands of years old at Coast Guard Beach in Eastham.

Michael Whatley, an interpreter

for the Cape Cod National Seashore said the exact age of the site, which was discovered by a local resident walking the beach, has not yet been determined.

Whatley speculated, however, these people may have been among the first permanent residents on Cape Cod following the last ice age.

Frank Ackerman, chief of interpretation at the Seashore, stressed there were several millennia between the recession of glacial ice on the Cape and the first true year-rounders.

While details are sketchy and will be until laboratory analysis can be conducted, Ackerman said

Please turn to page 7.



# Beach

Continued from page 1

excavation has uncovered what appears to have been an oblong dwelling which sat near a fresh-water shoreline, perhaps that of a kettle hole pond. The site was "well inland" which could mean anywhere between two to 15 miles.

"At this point, it remains to be seen whether there are significant charcoal remains to carbon date the site," Ackerman said. "Modern day archaeology relies on very humble materials. In other words there's a tendency to romanticize what is found."

Under normal circumstances, sites within the Seashore are not excavated. Material is left intact, Ackerman explained, because the recovery process is so destructive and "the longer things are left alone the more chance that new tools will be developed for analysis."

In this instance, however, the same natural forces that have moved the shoreline miles inland threaten to destroy the site.

The word artifact calls to mind some glorious treasure unearthed by the likes of Indiana Jones. In reality, archaeologists methodically and tediously sift through carefully mapped out segments of a site, looking for bits of charcoal or chips of stone created by crafting tools.

"In the right hands, in the right

sequence these materials can be very revealing," Ackerman said. All too often these tiny pieces of an intricately scientific puzzle are cast aside by the untrained resident who may be searching for some "spectacular or showy artifact."

Ackerman said it will be "a good while" before analysis yields more concrete details about who these people were and when they lived. The artifacts will be taken to a regional archaeological facility in Boston.

"What I think we might have here is a coastal band of people

with similar activities and lifestyles to the Algonquin Indians," Whatley said, explaining that the Algonquins spread all along the eastern seaboard for "many, many years."

The Nauset Indians, who were the first Americans to be encountered by the Pilgrims, were a subdivision of the Wampanoags, a subdivision of the Algonquins, Ackerman said.

"Whether or not these people were the direct predecessors of the Nausets," Whatley said, "remains to be seen." ■

## 6000-Year-Old Wash-Ashores?

*1000 Friday Dec 2, 1990*

# Coast Guard Beach Find Revealed As Cape First

By Kim Girard

*"The Indians dug a pit and filled it with hot rocks to cook their meals. Then they went away and over the years trees grew and the edges of the site got blurry...."*

National Seashore archaeologist George Stillson patiently repeats the story of life on Cape Cod more than 6000 years ago. The hearth he is speaking of covers a small site on Eastham's Coast Guard Beach discovered before Thanksgiving by a local amateur archaeologist.

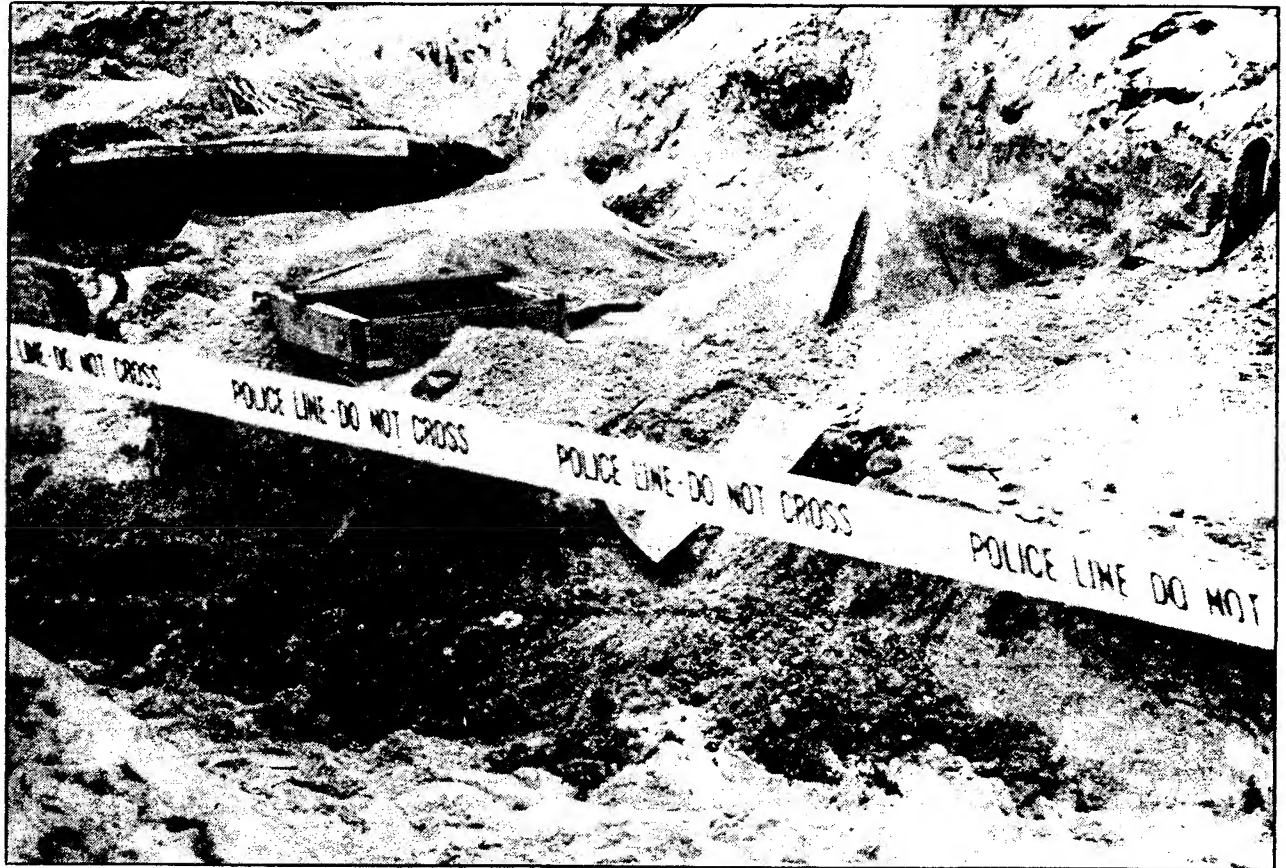
The occupation site, the only one of its kind discovered on the Cape, has been studied over the past week by a crew of amateur and professional archaeologists, but the dig will end when high tides are expected to sweep it all away this weekend.

"A site like this is unknown at present on the Outer Cape," said Frank McManamon, Washington-based chief of the Archaeological Assistance Division for the National Park Service, who formerly surveyed Cape archaeological finds. "The site is important because of the context in which it was found as well as the early time period."

The information gathered will be plotted on a computer to check for structural patterns.

Soil samples are also expected to determine vegetation cover at the time of the occupation and how Indians modified their environment.

According to an extensive National Park Service survey taken from 1979 to 1981 published in a book called *Chapters In The Archaeology of Cape Cod*, artifacts from the Middle Archaic period are rarely found on Cape Cod. National Seashore museum curator Mark Hertig said the absence of remains shows the Outer Cape was "used very lightly" 6000-8000 years ago.



The vandalized site on Coast Guard Beach yesterday morning.

TCC/STILLSON

"They don't find intact occupation sites," Mr Hertig said, adding that sites from this era are more common in southeastern New England. "It's very rare. They've been changed by farming and road building."

The Seashore publication explains that the few artifacts in the Park's museum collection which point to the Middle Archaic era are "surface finds" and not related to an entire occupation site.

"What we have may have been plopped there by someone," Mr Hertig said.

The Coast Guard Beach site has become an area of live learning over the past week as tourists, local residents with their dogs, Park officials, amateur archaeologists and students came to view the find.

Wednesday's unseasonably balmy temperatures brought out many inquisitive people.

The site director, Mr Stillson, and other Seashore officials took time to give lectures while excavating continued full speed ahead.

"We try to educate people by using the dig," Mr Stillson said. "We talk about the wrong way of doing this."

According to Massachusetts Historical Commission preservation planner Leonard Loparto, the site is an interesting twist for those who study average archaeological findings on the Cape.

"Up until the last 10 or 15 years, people only thought Woodland period sites (from 1000 to 1500 years ago) were here," he said. "While working, we've found out that people lived on the Cape 6000 years back."

Barbara Lvedtke, a pre-historian and professor at University of Massachusetts, Boston, said a site from the Middle Archaic period is a rare find on any coastline.

"It's hard to find a coastal site that hasn't been mixed up with other time periods," she said, adding that a similar site was found on the coast of Hull in the 1950s, yet washed away during the 1970s.

"With the rising sea level," she explained, "a lot of the sites go under water or they are washed away. The few sites that may remain are under a few feet of dirt." □

## Coast Guard Beach Dig Vandalized

A rare archaeological site on Eastham's Coast Guard Beach, dating back about 7000 years, was vandalized Wednesday night, leaving archaeologists to sift through the remains for lost information.

"Somebody did not have tools or more of the site would have been destroyed," site director and Seashore archaeologist George Stillson said. "The person who did this dug with their hands near the hearth eight or 10 feet along the front of the excavation."

Mr Stillson said the culprit was "after the hearth" and probably looking for artifacts—possibly an

amateur or professional "pot hunter" digging for a private collection.

The destroyed area had not been studied by the team of archaeologists which has worked on the site since last Friday.

"We'll sift through the disturbed area for lost information," Mr Stillson said. "But there's no way to determine if artifacts were stolen."

In an effort to prevent vandalism during the remaining days of excavation before expected destructive tides on Sunday, a guard will be posted at the site round the clock, Mr Stillson said.

K.G.



The archaeological dig in Eastham is covered by the tide on Sunday.

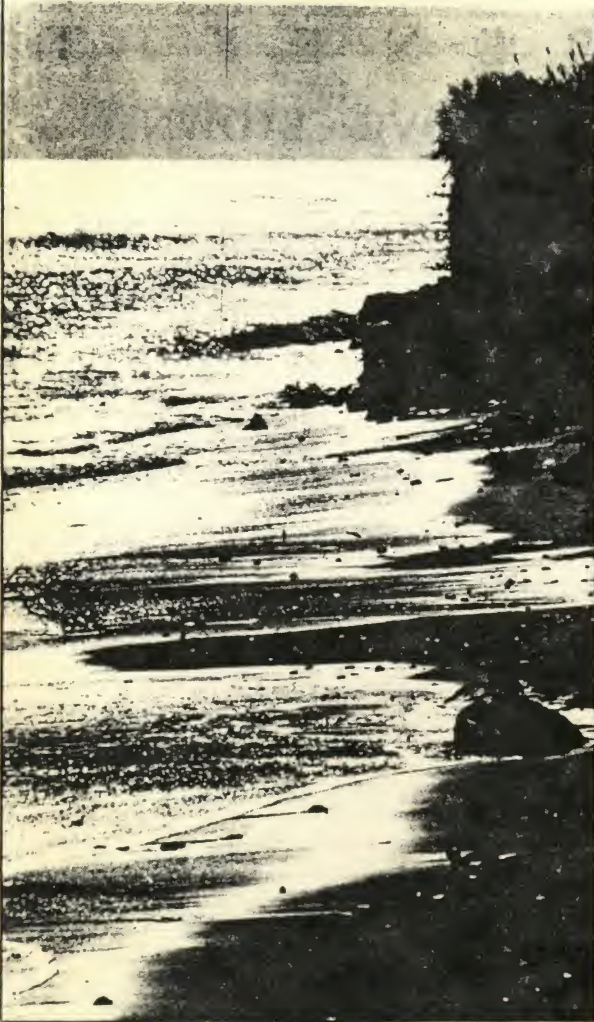
TCC/DONAHUE



Herb and Jinny Eldridge check Sunday's high tide in Chatham.

TCC/DONAHUE





Sunday's high tide pushes toward the bluffs at Coast Guard Beach in Eastham.

TCC/DONAHUE

Coast Guard Beach Update:

*Tuesday Dec 4-1990*

## With A Break From The Tides, New Finds Being Discovered

By John LoDico

The team of archaeologists excavating the remains of a 6000-year-old hearth site at Coast Guard Beach in Eastham has unearthed more remains about 20 feet off the beach in the nearby dune area.

According to National Seashore Archaeologist George Stillson, a backhoe dug a trench into the new site this past weekend and workers began the slow process of unearthing remains. They were under less pressure, too, as late forecasts indicated expected high tides may not be as devastating as anticipated.

On Sunday, Mr Stillson said, "We're trying to find the same ground surface" as the original find, which is located directly on the beach and subjected to tidal flooding on a daily basis.

"There is a prehistoric site there, too," he said, pointing to the new ditch in the dunes.

The new charred remains, just a few yards away from the original site, and presumably on the same topographic level, are not necessarily related to the 6000-year-old hearth, Mr Stillson said.

Archaeologists don't leap to such conclusions, he

said; the dig team will wait until some material found beneath the dunes is radiocarbon dated.

The archaeologists said that Eastham's Conservation Commission approved the dune dig.

The diggers are planning to use other measures, such as ground probes and magnetic devices to search the area around the recent finds. That information may lead to other excavations and certainly will be used to back up long-range plans to protect the site.

Mr Stillson was not too concerned about the bad weather forecast for today and tomorrow. He has visited the National Weather Service facility on Monomoy to get an accurate forecast and was told this weekend the winds would not be as bad as some predicted.

But he is looking forward to better weather and more normal tides.

"I'm hopeful that we'll make it through the high tides, then we'll return and dig out the beach site. Then we'll be able to do it right," he said.

The National Park Service has declared the site off limits to visitors. Mr Stillson hopes to station an interpreter off the site to answer questions from the curious.

# Storm washes out archaic

*The Advocate Thursday, Dec 6, 1990*

By K.C. Myers

The 7,000-year-old archaeological site found on Coast Guard Beach in Eastham last week escaped destruction from unusually high tides this weekend, thanks to calm seas and low winds, but was demolished Tuesday by the tides during a heavy rain and wind storm.

Tony Bonanno, chief ranger, said the original site on the beach was totally engulfed by waves Tuesday that pounded against the sand bluffs for hours during high tide. But he said archaeologists are hopeful that the waves will uncover more of the site that was previously covered by about six feet of sand. They know they will lose the original site, but they may be able to find additional information from the parts that were uncovered. He said the archaeologists will examine the new terrain today.

An extremely high tide hit the Cape this week, rising two to three feet above its usual level. Officials at the Cape Cod National Seashore feared that the 7,000-year-old fire pit and other artifacts found at the base of eroded dunes two weeks ago would be washed away by this tide. These are the same high tides that were responsible for exposing the site in the first place, said George Stillson, chief archaeologist of this dig.

Meanwhile, additional digging has revealed many new facts about the prehistoric dwelling site and the people who lived in it. Last Wednesday a backhoe dug a hole about 15 feet in back of the site on the dunes and hole to the south of the site on the beach. Both diggings were done to try to determine the size of the prehistoric finding. They unearthed other dwellings remains situated behind the original discovery. Stillson said the



*Dan Carns sifts soil through screen to find artifacts*

Advocate photo by K.C. Myers

backhoe revealed a similar prehistoric ground surface and another fire pit. The other hole revealed a prehistoric pond that probably partially surrounded the settlement, he said.

The area dug behind the dunes was also rich in stone artifacts that were mostly stone chippings that may have been arrow heads or tools. Dan Carns, who discovered the site two weeks ago while walking on the beach, said, "I find an artifact in practically every bucket of dirt they put on the screen."

Although small stone artifacts are abundant, the archaeologists said they

Continued to page 28



# Storm washes out site

Continued from page 1

are only useful to estimate the time period, which has been determined to be the middle archaic period, 3,000 years before pottery was invented. It is the soil, how the artifacts were buried and the overall topographic picture of the site that tells archaeologists most about the period, said Gerald Kelse, a paly-nologist, whose expertise is determining what types of vegetation and plants grew on the site. He said he does this by analyzing the soil.

The backhoe dug up another area alongside the first fire pit. This hole revealed soil that showed signs that there was a marsh or a pond next to the dwellings. "They probably had a really beautiful site here," said Stillson. "With hills protecting them on the north and a marsh on the other side." He said that 7,000 years ago the site was about four miles inland, not on the beach as it is today.

From the hole dug behind the original find, Stillson saw that the prehistoric ground surface descended to the level of the marsh. He said the water probably surrounded what is left of the site on the south and west. The area that now faces the ocean could have held many more dwellings but "we will never know because that part has washed away forever." He said he does not know if there are more dwellings north of the site.

"We could dig out this whole area for miles around and find more stone artifacts and fire pits, but we don't want to do that, or the Seashore does not want us to do that because it would ruin the dunes," said Stillson.

In fact, Stillson said digging a six-foot hole into the dunes with a backhoe in the middle of the National Seashore was a "drastic measure." He said the only reason the officials allowed it was because this site is so significant. Many of the other archaeological sites detected on the Cape have remained unexcavated because the sites are more valuable, or more informative, if they are left in their original positions.

The Eastham site is very important for two reasons, he said. One, it is equal to the oldest sites ever detected on the Cape. Two, it is more intact than any of the oldest sites. Stillson said the site was covered by sand relatively quickly a long time ago, when it was still in good shape. That happened because in the Late Woodland period, about 500 A.D., the indigenous peoples began burning much of the vegetated areas to clear fields for planting.

This killed the dune grass or scrubs that held the sand in place. Apparently, the site had been abandoned and then, when the dunes began to move, it was covered very quickly by sand, he said.

Sand is a safe way to bury something for centuries because it blocks out air but it is not heavy enough to flatten arti-

facts, he said. Stillson said the site on the beach gets covered with sand at every high tide. But that does not damage the site.

On the contrary, it protects it from poachers like the suspected amateurs who attempted to steal artifacts Wednesday night. Stillson said he has no idea if they got anything but it was evident that they had no tools and no clue about what they were doing. After every high tide the archaeologists dig up the sand brought up by the tides quickly and continue careful excavation.

Hopefully by tonight the archaeologists will have obtained all the information they need at the oceanfront site because a northeasterly storm has been predicted, said Stillson. He learned about the storm Sunday night. Since Monday, they have been working around the clock, he said. During high tide they work on the site behind the original. And since high tide was in the middle of the day this week, they worked on the original site at night with lights, said Stillson.

Stillson said he has no idea how much this excavation has cost the National Park Service. The professional archaeologists have been housed in Seashore dwellings for over two weeks now and have been working at least eight hours a day. Stillson said the real money will be spent in the laboratory analyzing the findings. This will be done with a "radio carbon-14 detector," which can detect the amount of carbon emitted from an object.

The amount of carbon emission tells the age of old organic material, said Linda Towle, an archaeologist with the park service. It can detect the age of anything that was alive as far back as 15,000 years ago, when a glacier still covered New England, she said.

Carns, an amateur archaeologist, said he discovered the "outline of a prehistoric, stone-lined fire pit," at the base of the eroded dunes while walking with his children on the beach on Thanksgiving week. He called Frank Ackerman, chief interpreter and cultural resource manager of the National Seashore, who immediately agreed that this find was worth notifying the National Park Service archaeologists.

Today, over two weeks later, Carns is still at the site as a "volunteer in part" (VIP) with between four and 12 professional archaeologists.

The team of archaeologists is being led by Stillson, who taught Carns archeology at Cape Cod Community College. Carns said he also took classes with Fred Dunford, an archaeologist, at the Cape Cod Museum of Natural History with whom he has worked as a VIP on another excavation in Orleans. Carns said he plans to pursue a degree in archeology.

"After this, I'm ready for the big-time," he said.



Tuesday's high tide pounds Coast Guard Beach in Eastham.

TCC/Barry Donah

*Fri Dec 7, 1990 YCC*



# Nature Giveth More I than I taketh As Storm Bares More Dig Sites

VCC Friday Dec 7, 1990

By Kim Girard

Archaeologists knew Mother Nature's merciless storm Tuesday could damage their ancient Coast Guard beach dig; but they are thankful today that all was not lost—and new information has been uncovered because of massive erosion.

The original 7000-year-old archaeological occupation site may have been swept away by record high tides, but almost 10 feet of erosion in the area has uncovered enough new finds to keep scientists busy for at least another week.

Archaeologists, back on the site Wednesday, were pleased that tides are getting lower and they said damage proved less severe than they had feared.

The original occupation site, which was sampled and studied since it was discovered before Thanksgiving, was washed away. But new areas dating back 3000 to 7000 years were uncovered during the storm.

"This is doing more good than bad," site director and National Seashore archaeologist George Stillson said as he watched the waves pound Coast Guard Beach Tuesday. "The storm will uncover the site more and leave it exposed."

He explained that waves were eroding the beach rapidly, yet not "cutting into layers of the ancient site" and, he assured, "We'll be here for a while."

Before Wednesday's high tide forced the crew of professionals and volunteers off the beach, archaeologists unearthed remains of a 3000- to 7000-year-old pottery bowl near the occupation site and hearth area.

"They salvaged it in a single chunk because the tides were coming in," National Park Ranger Michael Whatley said. He said the bowl-shaped pieces—some four inches square—"appeared to fit together" and are "probably of a more recent period," than stone chips left from the making of projectile points and scraping tools found previously at the occupation site.

"This may prove people lived in different time periods on the land," he said, "but it will be quite some time before they know for sure."

Other evidence uncovered over the past week may prove a test dig behind the beach site could be linked to the original hearth and occupation structure remains.

Archaeologist Emily Donlon said that judging from a test pit archaeologists dug last week behind the site, there is only about a 40-centimeter depth difference between the dune site and the beach.

"This may prove that this is one continuous site," she said.

But no facts can be verified until soil samples can be studied at the Charlestown laboratory.

"They're being cautious and they don't want to jump to conclusions," Ranger Whatley said.

The crew has also discovered soil evidence that a freshwater pond formerly existed on the site, which 7000 years ago was located about five miles from the coast.

Archaeologist Maria Capozzi said the site was covered with over two feet of sand last Friday. And on Saturday, they watched their tarps and protective screens float away. Tuesday, however brought the most frightening tides.

"A lot of that dune fell before our eyes," she said. "We were standing out there and a couple of us were slopped by waves."

Miss Capozzi and many of the other archaeology crew members waited out the storm at the National Seashore's lifesaving station.

"Once this all subsides, we can go out and see what's left

over and what we'll be able to do with it," she said. "I can't get worried yet."

Linda Towle, who supervises the archaeology branch for the North Atlantic regional office, said she hoped the crew would be able to finish work on the site.

"We worked under the tarp between 9 and 10 am until it got too dark to determine the change in soil color," she said.

Regardless of the storm, archaeologists Donlon and Freddie Dimmick weren't wasting any time as they continued their work inside, sorting soil samples and identifying them in packets.

"The shortest part of what we do is on the beach," Mrs Dimmick said. "The hard part is bringing it to the lab and separating it and keeping track of what was found where."

Mr Whatley said when archaeologists finally draft a layout map of the site, they hope to get a view of changes in the settlement from 7000 to about 4000 years ago. □





## *New Discoveries At Eastham Site*

Archaeologists continue to make new discoveries at the dig site on Coast Guard Beach in Eastham. Shown here (clockwise from top left) are exclusive aerial views of the beach looking north and the dig site; archaeologist Tessie Hayes-Doyle yesterday showing glee at the site where post molds and evidence of a rock support structure were discovered Wednesday; and further activity at the site, where archaeologists expect to be working for another two weeks. A meeting to discuss the recent discoveries is scheduled for tomorrow at 3 pm at Salt Pond Visitor Center in Eastham; call 255-3421 to confirm.

TCC PHOTOS: DONAHUE  
PHOTOS BY KELSEY-KENNARD



*TCC, Friday Dec 14, 1990*

The CC Fri Dec 14-1990



# Archaeologists Have Eye On Tides And Budget

By Kim Girard

All good things usually come to an end.

And they will in Eastham on Coast Guard Beach unless the federal government antes up with additional money early next year to continue a dig that has revealed an 8000-year-old archaeological site and has made amateur archaeologists out of all of us.

With the final day of scheduled digging inching closer because of expected high tides and a shrinking federal budget, archaeologists will complete work on the site (the only one of its kind on the Cape) this Sunday and pack up their tools to head home for a much-needed holiday break.

So far, four hearths have been excavated since the dig began November 23.

A test dig behind the beach has also brought evidence that a freshwater marsh overlooked the site, which was thought to be five miles inland in 6000 B.C.

Some onlookers have described the hearth dig as "a series of sandboxes" as they peer down at the grid-like site from the sand cliff behind the beach.

The first hearth to be found and excavated was a pit where food was cooked using rocks thought to be heated by fire nearby—sort of a prehistoric hibachi.

Archaeologists are also still excavating what they believe is the floor—a rich, dark, organic layer of soil—of a prehistoric dwelling. Few artifacts are found in this layer, although objects such as broken or discarded tools have been found outside the perimeter of the site.

A number of post molds, which are dark deposits left after buried wooden posts have rotted away, have also been identified suggesting where roof or wall supports stood.

## Complete Excavation

During a Thursday press conference at the dig, site leader and National Seashore archaeologist George Stillson said before high tides are expected at the end of the month, the crew will focus on completely excavating the beach site.

Soil samples will continue to be collected and identified from individual units and sent back to the Charlestown lab to be radioactive carbon-dated, Mr Stillson said.

Although Mr Stillson said evidence of a burial has not been found, the habitants probably believed in an afterlife.

"There is not a likelihood that a burial site will be found," said Seashore ranger Frank Ackerman, "because

prehistoric people traditionally separated their habitat from a burial area."

Mr Ackerman said bones, which contain calcium carbonate, disappear in the acidic New England soil within a few hundred years and consequently will not be found on site.

The only Middle Archaic burial site found in North America exists in Newfoundland, he added. Artifacts were found alongside the bones; archaeologists theorize natives buried with their dead tools that they thought might be needed in the afterlife.

"We haven't identified any ceremonial activity yet," Mr Stillson emphasized, although some amateur archaeologists have speculated there may be proof of a burial in the area, much of which is still uncovered.

Mr Stillson said natives living at the site "were not a group of savages eking out an existence." He said prehistoric people had a more complex society than previously believed.

"We'll be researching many questions in the future," he

(Continued on Page Five)



## ■ Beach dig

Continued from page 1

separate acts of vandalism in recent weeks.

Dan Carns of Orleans, an amateur archaeologist, first found evidence of the prehistoric site in mid-November while walking the beach with his two children.

### Site once several miles inland

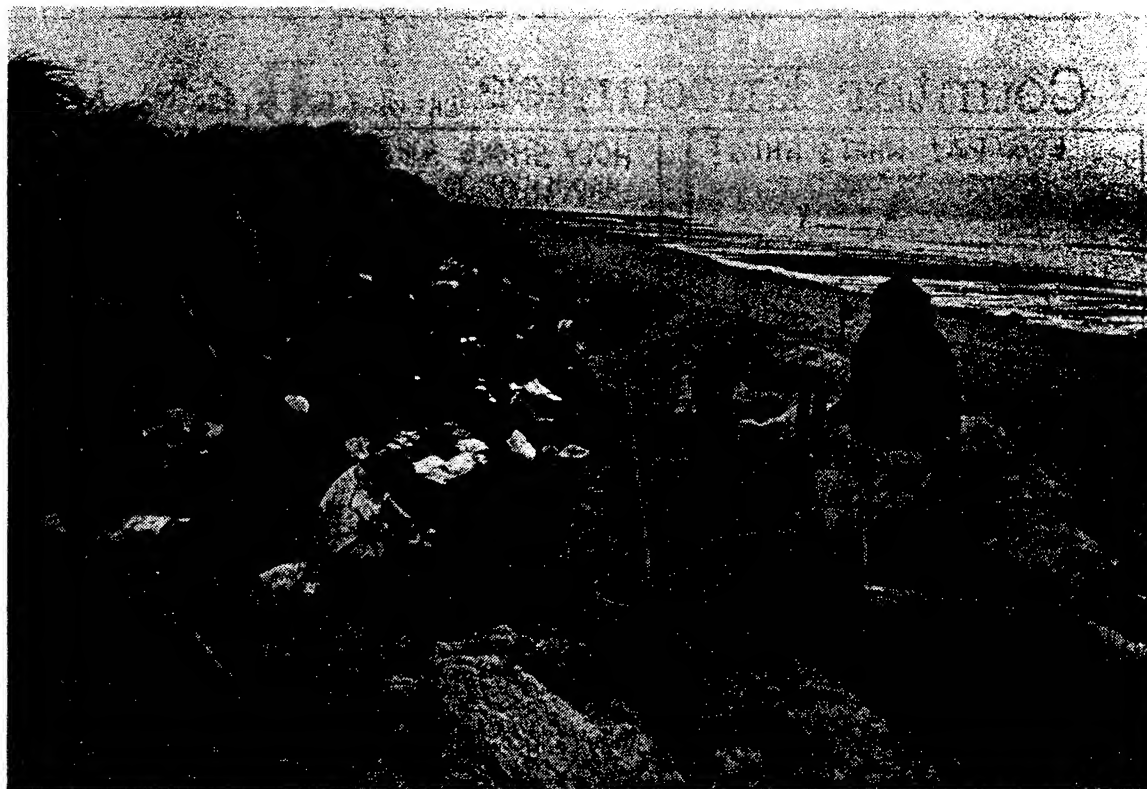
George Stillson, the archaeologist in charge of the dig, explained the settlement was created at a time when the land was several miles inland and contained a freshwater supply. He said the team believes the encampment was used regularly for about 7,000 years. By 1000 A.D., he suggested,

the tides had reached the settlement and covered it over.

The findings, to date, indicate a group of people with beliefs and intelligence, whose members moved two or three times a year, Stillson said at the press conference.

"The people were familiar with the environment. They knew it intimately," he added. "They increased in population and that meant they were successful at what they did. They had a complex society, more so than we previously credited to them."

Stillson explained that the 7,000-year history crosses the mid-Archaic, late Archaic and Wood-



**ARCHAEOLOGISTS AT COAST GUARD BEACH** have learned that the people living there approximately 7,000 year ago were part of "a complex society, more so than we previously credited to them," according to project head George Stillson.  
(Staff photo by David Coleman)

land periods, and possibly the mid-Woodland period. He said there is not a consensus about the identity of the people, but personally subscribes to the probability that they came over the Bering Land Bridge and were the ancestors of Native Americans.

The archaeologists suspect the encampment included several

other sites in the area, according to Stillson.

When the dig is completed, the team will continue its work in a Boston lab, examining and testing the materials recovered. A plan for further explorations will also be developed. Part of the work will include a computerized reconstruction of the site.

The archaeologists explained that the artifacts they are finding are of little or no monetary value.

A press release states: "The significance of this site lies in its undisturbed strata and the information that can be gained as arti-

facts are unearthed. This information also helps to decipher less complete sites in other localities."

"It is rare to find such a stratified site because of the activity here since 1620," Stillson commented.

Further explorations will depend on funding. Federal funds budgeted for other on-going projects have been diverted into the Eastham dig at the rate of at least \$5,000 a week, mostly for salaries. Other funding sources will have to be identified after the emergency phase is completed later this month. ■

722

Jun Dec 25, 1990

## Eastham Dig Ends

It was like watching a Christmas present getting slowly unwrapped, very slowly, as if piece by piece over 30 days.

And now, after a month of daily excavation, the archaeological dig at Coast Guard Beach in Eastham has ended.

The prehistoric site yielded much in the way of artifacts dating to the Middle Archaic period 8000 years ago; stone tools, pottery fragments, four hearths, seven molds of posts.

As for the artifacts, samples are now on their way to be tested for further study in a laboratory to confirm the age of the dwelling site and to begin the process of using the find as an educational tool.



Archaeologists digging sand-box style at the Coast Guard Beach site Friday.

## Eastham Dig—Continued

noted. "The deeper questions that only a site like this can answer."

### Step Two

The second phase following excavation is the lengthy, complicated lab work.

Linda Towle, Cultural Resource Center supervisor for the Seashore's North Atlantic Regional office, said scientists will look for blood residue in the soil samples, analyze food materials found in pots, do a pollen analysis to identify ecological features and use a "flotation process" to analyze seeds found in an overall effort to tell the story of the people who lived on the inland site.

As for determining the tribe of people who lived there, Mrs Towle said this information will probably remain a mystery. Although inhabitants probably came across the Bering Land Bridge, between Russia and Alaska, and are ancestors of native Americans living on Cape today, archaeologists cannot identify a particular tribe from evidence found so far.

Continuing a dig in the future will depend on how quickly the Seashore can obtain funds for next year, Mr Ackerman said.

"I can see us going for a grant in the future," Mr Stillson said. "And we'll be focusing on long-range planning."

Mr Stillson said added unexpected expenses from the Coast Guard Beach dig may keep them from other digs until the Seashore can obtain more regional funds.

"We'll be sitting down in January and working out the budget," he said. □

# Beach dig unveils 'complex society'

*Thurs Dec*

*20, 1990*

*Eastham Oracle*

By DOTTI FARRINGTON  
Special to Cape Cod Newspapers

The Coast Guard Beach archaeological site currently being examined by National Park Service personnel was once a multi-structured seasonal encampment, used by up to 50 individuals from several families.

National Park Service personnel, working at the site, held a press conference last Friday to announce this information and summarize the findings at the Eastham beach to date. Another such report is scheduled to be held by Dec. 24, the target date to complete the one major dig in operation.

Besides the press conference, a presentation on the dig at the Salt Pond Visitor Center on Saturday drew an overflow crowd of more than 600 people; it was the second time in two weeks people had to be turned away from such a presentation. A third meeting has been scheduled at the visitor center for this Saturday, Dec. 22 at 3 p.m.

A second dig was recently opened by bulldozer within 100 yards of the first to help evaluate the scope of the discovery of relics up to 8,000 years old. The second dig confirmed scientists' expectations about finding a complex settlement; it will be covered over again until a plan can be made on how and when to proceed.

The drama of the digs has been heightened all month because of the threat of the site being washed away by high tides. The 10 National Park Service archaeologists at the site were worried that the high tides of Dec. 4 might destroy the value of the find, but instead the erosion was helpful in uncovering more artifacts of significance.

The next round of unusually high tides are due in at the end of December, but workers hope to complete their relic recovery by Christmas. The workers built a dike around the main dig and high tides lap at it, but so far have not broken through. Additionally, a 24-hour ranger patrol was established to guard the site after two

Please turn to page 10



Thursday 12/27/90 -



**ARCHAEOLOGISTS RACE TIME AND TIDES** in an effort to uncover more information about the Coast Guard Beach site, possibly the oldest undisturbed site of a habitation in the Northeast.

(Staff photo by David Coleman)

## Dig drama continues to unfold as New Year's Eve high tide looms

By **SUSANNA GRAHAM**  
Cape Cod Newspapers Staff

Like carefully turning the pages of an ancient text, archeologists at Coast Guard Beach have painstakingly sifted through the fine layers of earth which encapsulated 6,000 to 8,000 year-old secrets.

The first chapter of the dis-

covery of the mid-archaic site at the Eastham beach came to a close Sunday as archeologists completed what has been a four-week dig.

"When we first started here, we wondered whether we had a few hours or days," said George Stillson, the project director. "We have had four weeks and what we thought would destroy

the area in fact opened up more of it for us."

The site was first revealed in November as heavy erosion ate into the Cape's shorelines. The threat of future erosion and high tides in early December created a dramatic race against nature: archeologists worked "like crazy," as tides and daylight

Please turn to page 12

# ■ Dig

Continued from page 1

permitted to finish the project.

"We were able to accomplish everything we set out to do," Stillson said. "We saved what would have been taken away by the tides which will undoubtedly destroy this site."

Speaking at a "close out press conference," last Friday, Stillson said the uncovered artifacts and soil samples will be taken back to a Boston lab where the second phase of discovery will begin.

"Because there has never been a site like this one before," Stillson said, he and his co-workers are looking forward to inventing new methods for analyzing the types of deposits found.

Frank Ackerman, chief of interpretation for the Cape Cod National Seashore, said this may be the oldest undisturbed site of a habitation in the entire Northeast.

"There have been other sites of this age known," Ackerman said. "What's unusual is finding one in an undisturbed condition. Sites this old are usually found when a bulldozer bites a hole in them."

In addition to providing new in-

formation to existing knowledge about the middle-archaic and woodland periods, Stillson said the find may produce corrections to previously held theories.

Linda Toll, chief of the archaeology branch of Cultural Resources Center for the North Atlantic region of the National Park Service, said, "We will find the money necessary to complete this project."

"It may take a while," she added, "but this is extremely important."

A National Seashore press release states: "Several earthen features were demolished as successive strata of deposit were excavated. Among these features were four hearths and seven molds of posts that apparently supported a structure."

A second dig was opened in the dune behind the first-discovered site and confirmed scientists' expectations that a complex settlement existed on what was once a freshwater shoreline, several miles inland.

Ackerman stressed that this surrounding area will be left intact unless Mother Nature threatens again as she did in this latest investigation.

"The tools for analysis which George (Stillson) has mentioned



**PROJECT HEAD GEORGE STILLSON:** "Never been a site like this one before."

(Staff photo by David Coleman)

did not exist a decade ago," Ackerman said. "It would be a crime to disturb anything further knowing that 10 or 20 years down the line we might have more advanced technology which could tell us a lot more."

It is the policy of the Cape Cod National Seashore to leave sites alone for this very reason, Ackerman added.

"Archaeology usually just tests sites," he said. "We rarely have

such an opportunity to look at a whole contiguous area stratigraphically."

As analysis progresses, the Seashore plans to hold a series of talks at the Salt Pond Visitor Center dealing with new information and future plans for the area. Ackerman said the talks will be held "probably during school vacation times" to accommodate the largest possible number of residents.

Artifacts will be returned to the Seashore and tentative plans are to set up an exhibit. Eastern National Park and Monument Association has also provided \$2,000 to fund a documentary of the project.

Ackerman noted that the ocean shoreline, which is a "high energy beach all the time" is even more so during winter months when storms out of the northeast are likely. Above average high tides are expected on New Years Eve.

Ackerman and Stillson said the site will be monitored daily for further erosion. Patrols to protect against vandalism in the area will also continue.

"Ideally Mother Nature will let us go back to the lab and give us some time," Stillson said. "Because we're not just looking for answers, we want to find out what kinds of questions we should be asking." ■



# Coast Guard Beach site may be 11,000 years old

By SUSANNA GRAHAM  
Cape Cod Newspapers Staff

Santa had an unexpected surprise on Christmas Eve for the archeologists who were wrapping up their month-long dig at Coast Guard Beach in Eastham.

Two last-minute discoveries on Dec. 24 may move estimates of the site's age back several thousand years.

While initial dating placed the site within the Middle Archaic period — approximately 7,000 years ago — a drill-like tool typi-

cally used during the Early Archaic period — 8,000 to 10,000 years ago — was found. A stone flake discovered in another part of the excavation may date back to the Paleoindian period: 11,000 years ago.

Early-Archaic and Paleoindian sites are "extremely rare, especially in the Northeast," according to a press release from the National Park Service.

"Murphy's Law applies to archeology," said George Stillson, head archeologist on the project, to a standing-room-only crowd at

the Cape Cod National Salt Pond Visitor Center. "So it's a sure bet you have your most significant discovery on the last day of a dig."

Putting 11,000 years in perspective, Stillson asked the crowd to go back in time to the birth of Jesus, before the construction of the Great Wall, even before the first written history.

Barely able to contain his excitement, Stillson exclaimed, "It blows your mind!"

At a press conference before the public press

Please tu

*Eastham Oracle 1/2*

## EASTHAM ORACLE

### Beach

Continued from page 1

Stillson said: "What we have found is the first definite indication of Paleo-people on the Cape."

So little has been found from this period on Cape Cod, Stillson said, because much of the landmass has been "drowned." Sea levels were 400 feet lower during that long ago time and land stretched out to Georges Bank.

The first colonization of the area occurred during the Paleoindian period, several thousand years after the retreat of the glaciers. Presumably, Stillson said, these people came via the Bering Straits land bridge which connected Alaska and Russia.

He explained a school of archeological thought which posits that people of the Paleoindian to Early Archaic periods arrived, settled and then died out due to changes in the environment.

"It was a very unpredictable period when the ecology was changing rapidly," Stillson said, explaining that these rapid changes produced equally rapid alterations in food sources, hence great instability.

During the Middle Archaic Period the ecology

stabilized and, based on the high number of artifacts found, archeologists think a population occurred within the Middle Archaic period.

That artifacts spanning all three periods were found in the one Coast Guard Beach site toward a theory Stillson is more inclined to support. He said the people of all three periods were inhabiting the area continuously.

Couching his comment by noting that he is awaiting confirming analysis, Stillson said: "If we find evidence that gives us continuous habitation, we will have a site like there's never been."

Stillson said the crew has been going through a boring, yet necessary, process of cataloging the artifacts and soil samples in its inventory. Actual analysis should begin within a few weeks.

Stillson said Mother Nature is giving them a reprieve they hoped for, allowing them to keep the materials they have so far gathered, without the need for immediate rescue work.

"There has been some erosion," he said, "but the site is holding up well." ■

### War





(Front to back) Archaeologists Emilie Donlon, Freddie Dimmick and Tessie Hayes Doyle prepare the site yesterday.

TCC/DONAHUE

### By Kim Girard

The digging crew is back on Coast Guard Beach. Cape Cod National Seashore archaeologists returned to the beach Wednesday morning to check out any rare finds that vast erosion may have uncovered. They will work perhaps until tomorrow's high tide.

Archaeologist George Stillson said the team is looking for certain types of projectile points. Although the original occupation site discovered in November, dating back 11,000 years was destroyed by erosion, they are now digging in a new area which is perhaps 7000 years old, Mr Stillson said.

George Stillson surveys a stretch of dune near Coast Guard Beach in Eastham yesterday.

TCC/DONAHUE



Tessie Hayes Doyle works at the Coast Guard Beach site.

TCC/DONAHUE

"There is evidence of structures here," Mr Stillson said. "This seems to be a very important period."

He explained that the area had eroded differently than expected. "It's getting nibbled away so this is a different kind of salvage," he said, adding that they had expected more extensive erosion.

The archaeologists will continue work in their Charlestown laboratory after this weekend. The eventual goal is to provide an entire map of the area and detail the landscape from 11,000 to 7000 years ago. Pollen samples are expected to reveal the ecological features of the environment and it has already been theorized that the 11,000-year-old site set back approximately five miles from the shore and a marsh existed on the site.

The original occupation site was discovered in November by amateur archaeologist Dan Carns. Mr Carns, who discovered a pre-historic hearth while strolling the beach with his two children, worked with a crew of seashore archaeologists for about a month on the dig site. Soil samples and various artifacts were found during the dig, which received national attention in *Newsweek* magazine.

Mr Stillson will give a talk at Snow Library in Orleans (see Weekend listing). He will use slides for the presentation and discuss labwork currently in progress in Charlestown. The lab tests have yet to confirm an exact date of materials gathered at the site. Radio carbon dating is used on soil samples to determine the exact time period.



# Archaeologists Return To Coast Guard Beach Dig

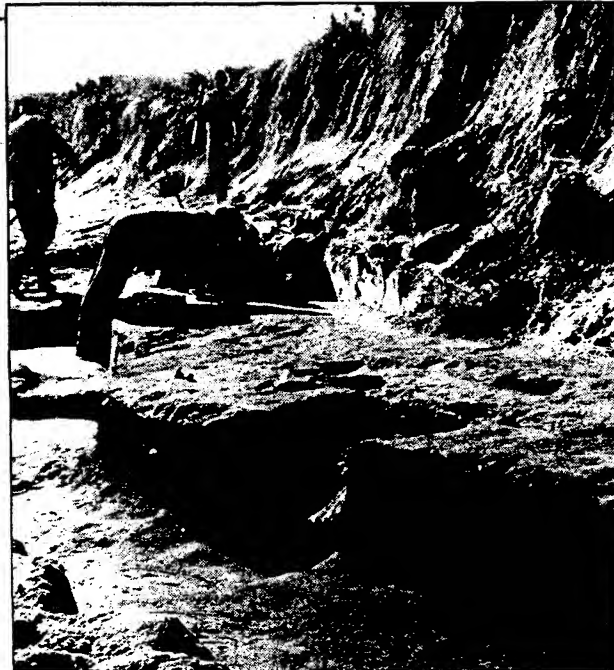


George Stillson surveys a stretch of dune near Coast Guard Beach in Eastham yesterday.

TCC/DONAHUE









*Eastham Oracle 2/25/91*

# Archaeologists maintain the past

By SUSANNA GRAHAM  
Cape Cod Newspapers Staff

Archaeologists returned to the Coast Guard Beach site last week, according to Frank Ackerman, chief of interpretation for Cape Cod National Seashore, for "maintenance purposes."

"They removed a small concentration of artifacts which were being threatened by an undercut in the shoreline due to erosion," Ackerman explained. "It was not a resumption of the full scale salvage."

While archaeologists finished the first stage of their excavation in late December and have returned to their Boston lab to analyze their finds, public interest has not dwindled.

standing-room-only by 2 p.m. when the lecture was scheduled to begin. Many residents, disappointed, returned to their cars which filled Sentry Bank's and Post Office Square's lots.

Tentative dating places the age of the site at 11,000 years old. According to Stillson, the analysis which will allow researchers to nail down the actual age of arti-

facts is under way, but will take some time.

"A great deal has not been accomplished in the analysis yet," Ackerman said. "Partly because of the need for funding, partly because of the time-consuming nature of the analytical process."

Provided there is funding, Ackerman said the Seashore is hopeful that archaeologists will resume the dig "sometime in April." ■

# Time and Tides, Celebrates 11,000 Years

Text by Joyce Johnson

Photos by Barry Donahue

"Time and Tides," a video program documenting the discovery of a unique 11,000-year-old archaeological site at Coast Guard Beach in Eastham, will be shown to the public starting in mid-April, according to Cape Cod National Seashore officials.

The 13-minute program records the excavation and examination of the rare find which probably dates back to about 9000 B.C. Videotaping began almost immediately after it was discovered in late November by Dan Carns of Orleans while he was walking along the shore after a northeast storm.

Seashore Ranger Frank Ackerman, chief of interpretation and cultural resource management, says the video was made because at first there was deep concern that erosion would result in the loss of the find in the next storm, expected within days.

As it turned out, subsequent storms actually enhanced the discovery, removing sections of the bank and exposing even more archaeological material.

Ranger Ackerman recommended that VisCom, a Hatham video film production company, be hired to document the excavation starting immediately.

"We decided still photography would not be as effective and a motion picture production would be prohibitively expensive," Ranger Ackerman told *The Cape Codder* last week.

Ackerman says it would have been years before the laboratory phase of the excavation was completed and reports and artifacts released to the Seashore museum.

"Initially we presumed we had a limited amount of time before the site would be eliminated by erosion, but that was not the case," he says. "However, it would be years before we could plan permanent exhibits,

with no means of telling the story of the site because the resource would no longer exist."

He says the video would also be an effective means of showing visitors the power of winter "nor'east" storms which tear at the shoreline.

The site is much more extensive than first thought. Various tests are being made to estimate just how large it is.

Ranger Michael Whately, who supervises programming at the Seashore's Salt Pond Visitor Center in Eastham, praised the VisCom video program, reviewed by Park officials last week, for its "exceptionally high quality."

The video was recently favorably reviewed at a meeting in Eastham of officials from the National Park Service North Atlantic Region which includes the New England states, New York and New Jersey.

Whately says it will be shown to small groups at the center on a regular video screen and may be converted to film for larger audiences if funds can be found. A longer video version of the production is expected to be available for sale at the center bookstore this summer.

Ranger Ackerman says vandalism is still a concern even though the site is guarded.

"We are trying to balance the need for the public to be aware of the science plans with the fact the site is potentially vulnerable to vandalism," he says.

Penalties for disturbing the site are up to a year in jail and \$10,000 in fines.

Emero Weisler, a co-owner of VisCom, says his company has managed to survive the recession by producing documentaries, many of them for Cape organizations. They include "Iron Woman," a documentary featuring Harwich athlete and triathlon winner Beth Nelson produced for the cable sports network, as well as a program for the Association of Retired Citizens of Cape Cod to promote its supportive employment program. VisCom also produces training films. ♦

—G.T.H.F.D.—

# WHAT'S ON CAPE

CAPE COD'S WEEKLY ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT MAGAZINE

APRIL 23 • MAY 2 • SECTION 2 • THE CAPE CODDER



## Archaeology Series at Cape Museum

By Linda Quinlan

Cape Cod Museum of Natural History announces a special seminar series on "Topics in the Archaeology of Cape Cod."

The seminar, sponsored by Software 2000, consists of six lectures by visiting archaeologists. Fred Dunford, staff archaeologist for the museum, will give the opening remarks at each lecture.

Joanne Corsano of the museum says this series re-focuses the museum's efforts "to get involved with adult education, and aims for a very general audience."

She says finding archaeologists who would agree to be involved in the seminar wasn't very difficult. "Fred made some phone calls about the series to six different people, and got six yeses."

All the lectures include a slide show; they are presented six consecutive Wednesdays, 7 pm, beginning May 1. The lectures and speakers are as follows: May 1, "Riding the Waves of Time: Archaeological Discoveries at Coast Guard Beach," presented by George Stillson, project supervisor of the Coast Guard dig and staff archaeologist for National Park Service; May 8, "The Whydah Shipwreck and Cultural Resource Management," presented by





▲ *George Stillson at the archaeological site, Coast Guard Beach*



▲ *Barry Clifford and Whydah artifacts*

Dr. Christian Hamilton, principal investigator of the Whydah project; May 15, "18th Century Native American Settlements and Subsistence Patterns" about a site in Mashpee, presented by Ellen Rose Savulis, from the Department of Anthropology, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

The final three lectures are: May 22, "Archaeological Investigations of 19th Century Whaling Activities in Woods Hole," presented by Suzanne Glover, senior archaeologist of the Public Archaeology Laboratories in Pawtucket, Rhode Island; May 29, "The Willow Bend Site in Mashpee: A Pre-Historic Cold Weather En-

*Continued on page 5*





*Shoe artifact from the wreck of the Whydah*

## Archaeology

*Continued from page 1*

campment," presented by Dr. Leslie C. Shaw from the Department of Anthropology, University of Massachusetts, Amherst; June 5 "Keepers of the Treasures: Archaeology as Historic Preservation," presented by Constance A. Crosby, preservation planner from Massachusetts Historical Commission.

A wine and cheese reception follows each lecture giving participants time to meet with the lecturers.

The cost of the series is \$20 for members of

the museum, \$25 for non-members; individual lectures are \$4 for members and \$5 for non-members.

"People say the bad economy has kept them from going out at night," says Caruso. "So because we had some funding for this particular event we didn't feel we had to set a high price to make money...the printing costs and advertising and the like are covered. But we are asking that people register for the series or individual lectures."

The seminar, which may become an annual event, will shed new light on the Cape's history. To make a reservation, call the museum at 896-3867. ♦



*Archeological site, Coast Guard Beach.*

*In Eastham*

## Stillson Will Resume Dig At Eastham Site

The end of April marks not only the arrival of May flowers but also the return of archaeologist George Stillson and his crew to Coast Guard Beach in Eastham.

Starting Monday and continuing a southward dig for four weeks, Mr Stillson expects to continue to uncover more of the coastal site that was initially discovered around Thanksgiving last year. The dig now is known as the "Carns site" after Dan Carns, who discovered the prehistoric hearth and worked with the crew until Christmas Eve.

On the last day of the dig, Mr Stillson said he began to notice details that may go back 11,000 years. Mr Stillson says the Carns site now has potential "to rewrite prehistoric history for the entire North Atlantic region."



# Archaeological site to be reopened

By SUSANNA GRAHAM  
Cape Cod Newspapers Staff

"A successor project" to the archaeological dig at Coast Guard Beach in Eastham is scheduled to get underway Monday morning, according to Frank Ackerman, chief of interpretation for the Cape Cod National Seashore.

Two last minute finds at the site last December have prompted the newest dig. The artifacts may place habitation of the site as old as 11,000 years; it could be the oldest undisturbed site ever found in the Northeast.

Ackerman said his agency is required to evaluate such sites as potential nominees to the National Register of Historic Places. The upcoming work at the site is necessary to determine "exactly why and how" this site would be National Register material.

The irony of it all, Ackerman said, is the requirement will cause "irreversible alteration to the site," a measure the National Seashore is usually committed to avoiding, barring emergency circumstances. It is normally the National Park Service's practice to leave archaeological sites as undisturbed as possible for future researchers when technology may be more advanced.

Ackerman explained the work scheduled to begin on Monday will adjoin the previous excavation site.

"The two significant finds just as the previous project closed were at the westerly edge of the site," Ackerman said. "So that's one of the directions that will be extended."

The dig will also extend in a southerly direction where ar-

chaeologists suspect evidence of a pre-historic wetland.

The analysis of artifacts and soil samples taken earlier from the site has "barely begun," according to Ackerman.

While there had been some questions about the availability of funding for the project last winter, Ackerman said "special funding supplied by the regional director will allow us to get this four weeks of work done."

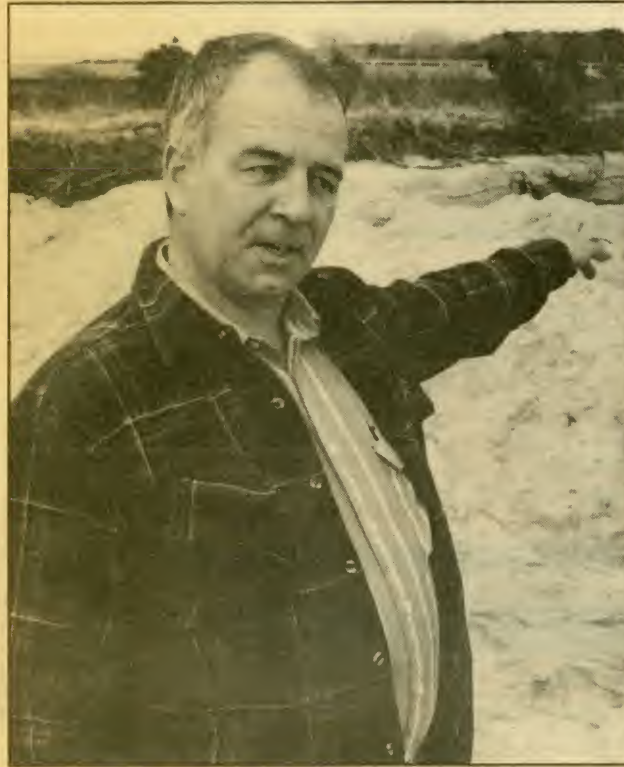
Ackerman also said he anticipates the costs on this phase of the project to be lower.

"We previously responded to an emergency (erosion which both uncovered and threatened to de-

stroy the site) and the archaeologists had to work very fast," he said. "It was more costly. This time they'll be able to be a little more efficient. They've had time to phase and structure the work that will be done."

Throughout the stormy winter months which followed the closing of the site, the National Seashore kept a watchful eye on the area for damaging erosion. What happened instead, Ackerman said, is a "winter sands accumulation."

Ackerman said the site is deeply buried and "clearly that overburden will have to be removed before the actual excavation begins." ■



Cape Cod National Seashore archaeologist George Stillson at the Coast Guard Beach site yesterday.



Cape Cod National Seashore Park Ranger Frank Ackerman filling folks in at the site yesterday.

TCC/DONAHUE



# Archaeologists Are Back At Work At Coast Guard Beach 'Carns Dig'

*The Cape Codder - April 30, '91* By Kim Girard

Orientation of the crew and some digging began yesterday, but pollen scientist Gerald Kelso, who is working once again with archaeologists at Coast Guard Beach in Eastham, was up until midnight Sunday counting pollen under his microscope from soil sample excavations.

These samples are expected to determine vegetation on the site when it was occupied by families during pre-historic times.

Cape Cod National Seashore archaeologist and site director George Stillson actually returned to the beach last week to begin preparing the site for an additional four weeks of excavation.

In addition, Orleans resident Dan Carns, who originally discovered a pre-historic hearth in November which led to the large-scale project—the site is now referred to as the "Carns Dig"—is also back on the scene. He's been hired by the National Seashore to work as an interpreter during the excavation and will be explaining the relevance of his find to Coast Guard Beach visitors.

Archaeologists, happy to be back at the site, will continue testing a pre-historic wetland area and study additional site areas, gathering details to confirm that families lived here between 5000 and 11,000 years ago.

According to Seashore Chief Interpreter and Cultural Resource Management Director Frank Ackerman, archaeologists were awarded an extra month to excavate after the National Seashore's regional director reviewed the project and granted an additional \$60,000 from an emergency fund for unexpected discoveries.

The money will pay for supplies, salaries and accommodations for the crew for four weeks, Mr Ackerman noted.

## Sand Pit To Busy Site

To the casual beachcomber, the site appears to be just a large, unassuming sand pit. Yet in a week or two, the characteristic grids and sample areas will be humming with excavation activity once again. Mr Stillson was busy relocating the edges of the initial occupation site yesterday morning.

"After the initial dig, we decided what we wanted to do," he said. "And this time we're doing it."

In the meantime, Mr Stillson's crew members were attending orientation sessions before being allowed to dig in. Of the six-person crew, two archaeologists, Christy McDonald, who has worked with Mr Stillson at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and Nancy Pendelton, also a National Seashore archaeologist, are newcomers to the site. Mary Troy, Emilie Donlon and Tess Doyle are returning to continue the dig. Mr Stillson said a seventh position will be filled by different archaeologists on a rotating weekly basis.

After Seashore officials received the green light from Eastham selectmen and the state's Coastal Zone Management, the National Park Service was allowed to backhoe a 60-foot long, six-foot deep pit on the beach Friday.

Mr Stillson said he monitored the backhoeing until the organic surface traces (evidence of plowing) from the former site became visible.

Ranger Ackerman noted that unlike the eroded banks behind the dig area, the area of initial excavation was unexpectedly blanketed over the past few months by many layers of protective soil because of the "winter storm cycle."

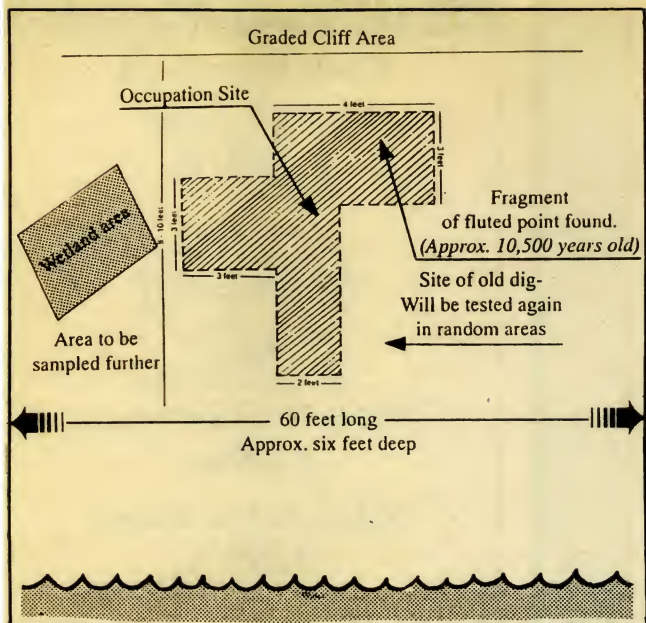
Mr Stillson said the dig will continue in three phases.

One area will be tested in plots to discover whether archaeologists missed anything in the initial excavation. Although the bulk of the site dates back to the Middle Archaic period, 5000 to 7000 years ago, archaeologists discovered an exciting and rare find two days before the excavation ended—a fragment of a fluted point, which could date back to the Paleo-Indian period over 10,000 years ago. This is the second area the archaeologists will examine.

Mr Stillson said the 34-inch artifact is "a teeny, tiny thing" that probably originates from a spear or cutting tool. He noted that the Paleo-Indian period followed the Ice Age by only a few thousand years.

Also found a few days before the winter hiatus was a triangular stone drill piece. Mr Ackerman said the stone





find, which is not from the Paleo-Indian period, was probably attached to a since-decomposed wooden handle to create an ancient drill.

The third area scheduled for further excavation is believed to be a wetland site. Mr Stillson said the archaeologists will examine the relationship between the occupation site and the wetland and determine whether the two time periods overlap.

### Just Speculation

Although archaeologists have guessed the age of site areas and the artifacts found, Ranger Ackerman explained that the deductions are purely speculation until results from carbon dating can confirm the guesses.

Although the everyday visitor to the site may think of artifacts as museum-quality vases and stone tools, Ranger Ackerman said New England finds are "a great deal more subtle."

"We look for small bits of charcoal, fire-cracked rock from a cooking fire or flakes from stone implements," he explained. Ranger Ackerman said the most interesting details of the dig are not artifacts, but rather the pre-historic hearth and seven post-molds (a remarkable number, he says) found during the initial excavation. These details all provide pieces to the puzzle of an occupation site, a wigwam or hut, which once existed five miles inland.

The drawback, he notes, is that once the excavation is

(Continued on Page Sixteen)

## Dig—Continued *April 30, 1991, cont.*

finished, the features eventually erode or are destroyed, thus the need to keep scrupulous field reports and soil samples to document the features as they are unearthed.

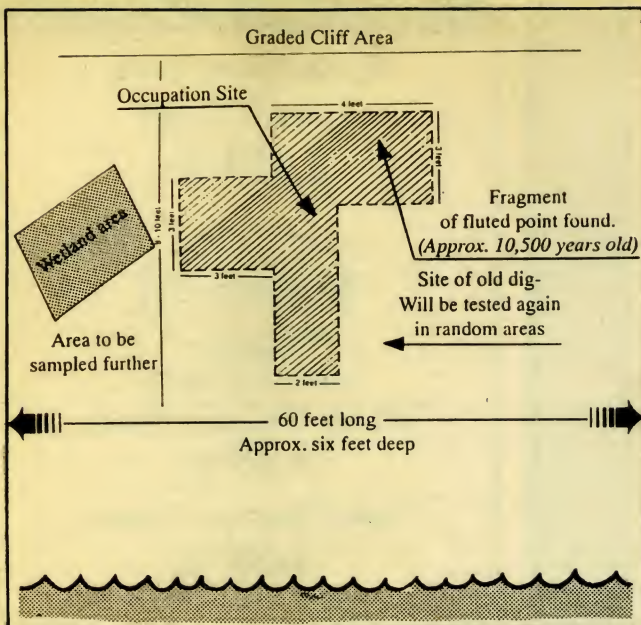
Mr Stillson spends evenings in the apartments over the Coast Guard Beach garage documenting and mapping the details of the day's excavation on his computer.

"I am working on computerization constantly," he said. The end product of the excavation will be a computerized map of the entire area depicting features and the ages of the different excavation areas.

The map will also show that different families may have inhabited the site from 11,000 to 5000 years ago. Artifacts found will relate to these periods.

Archaeologist Maria Capozzi, who also worked the initial dig, did not return this month to field work as she is cataloguing Seashore materials with Mark Hertig, who is curator of the National Seashore Museum. Over the next year, the two will catalogue pre-historic artifacts found from 1978 to 1984.

Ranger Ackerman said the Coast Guard Beach site will be open to visitors weekdays from 8 am to 4:30 pm. The site will be guarded by a park ranger each night.



find, which is not from the Paleo-Indian period, was probably attached to a since-decomposed wooden handle to create an ancient drill.

The third area scheduled for further excavation is believed to be a wetland site. Mr Stillson said the archaeologists will examine the relationship between the occupation site and the wetland and determine whether the two time periods overlap.

### Just Speculation

Although archaeologists have guessed the age of site areas and the artifacts found, Ranger Ackerman explained that the deductions are purely speculation until results from carbon dating can confirm the guesses.

Although the everyday visitor to the site may think of artifacts as museum-quality vases and stone tools, Ranger Ackerman said New England finds are "a great deal more subtle."

"We look for small bits of charcoal, fire-cracked rock from a cooking fire or flakes from stone implements," he explained. Ranger Ackerman said the most interesting details of the dig are not artifacts, but rather the pre-historic hearth and seven post-molds (a remarkable number, he says) found during the initial excavation. These details all provide pieces to the puzzle of an occupation site, a wigwam or hut, which once existed five miles inland.

The drawback, he notes, is that once the excavation is

(Continued on Page Sixteen)

## Dig—Continued *April 30, 1991, cont.*

finished, the features eventually erode or are destroyed, thus the need to keep scrupulous field reports and soil samples to document the features as they are unearthed.

Mr Stillson spends evenings in the apartments over the Coast Guard Beach garage documenting and mapping the details of the day's excavation on his computer.

"I am working on computerization constantly," he said. The end product of the excavation will be a computerized map of the entire area depicting features and the ages of the different excavation areas.

The map will also show that different families may have inhabited the site from 11,000 to 5000 years ago. Artifacts found will relate to these periods.

Archaeologist Maria Capozzi, who also worked the initial dig, did not return this month to field work as she is cataloguing Seashore materials with Mark Hertig, who is curator of the National Seashore Museum. Over the next year, the two will catalogue pre-historic artifacts found from 1978 to 1984.

Ranger Ackerman said the Coast Guard Beach site will be open to visitors weekdays from 8 am to 4:30 pm. The site will be guarded by a park ranger each night. ☐



# Beach dig's significance continues to grow

By SUSANNA GRAHAM  
Cape Cod Newspapers Staff

When archaeologist George Stillson talks about the excavation under way at Coast Guard Beach, he generously sprinkles his comments with the phrase, "a site of this significance".

What is the significance of the site discovered in late November and reopened last week?

Just as the different levels of the site reveal clues about various time periods, Stillson said the site's significance is multi-layered.

"The integrity of the site is one thing," he said. While the Cape has its share of archaeological finds, this site is unusual in that it has been spared the impact of development.

From the earliest settlers crisscrossing the landscape with their plows, to today's backhoes and bulldozers, little of Cape Cod's

terrain has been spared the scars of progress.

Not only is the site — which has been determined to be a dwelling location of some sort — relatively untouched, it is also old. Two last minute finds on Christmas Eve, as the first phase of the dig came to a close, may date some periods of use as far back as the Paleoindian period (10,000 to 12,500 years ago) to the early archaic period (8,000 to 10,000 years ago).

Driving home from Provincetown with his wife this weekend, Stillson said it occurred to him that the area is also the farthest east the middle-archaic era (6,000 to 8,000 years ago) goes — another significant point.

Stillson said the information which will potentially be revealed at the beach site is not merely cultural, but ecological and environmental as well. "We will be able to gather that kind of infor-

Please turn to page 12

■ Page 12 THURSDAY, MAY 9, 1991

## ■ Beach digs

Continued from page 1

mation about the earliest period on the Cape," Stillson said. "I think that is going to be a big part of the whole thing."

And last, as far as significance, and often thought of as least, is the amount of knowledge gleaned about the middle woodland period (1,000 to 2,000 years ago).

"There is some tremendous stuff from the middle woodland period," he said. "That is something that is being overlooked. We're not just here to dig up old stuff, but to study the site in its full potential."

Thus far, Stillson said, nothing

from the late woodland period (1,000 A.D. to the first European contact) has been found, "Which means to me that the sand blew in and made the place less habitable."

Uncovered by severe erosion early last winter, the site is now known as the "Carns Dig" after Dan Carns of Orleans, who first discovered it in November. While it is the policy of the National Park Service to leave archaeological finds intact, the threat of erosion uncovering the site, exposing it to destruction, set in motion an emergency rescue operation.

When the archaeologists left on

Christmas Eve, the site was first covered with a synthetic filter fabric, then filled in with a backhoe. This experimental protective measure worked better than expected.

"When we finally got down to where we'd left it and uncovered it," Stillson said, "it was as if we'd been there yesterday."

This newest phase of the project is a necessary step toward nominating the site to the National Register of Historic Places. Not only is it mandated that any federal agency report the discovery of historic sites as potential candidates for the National Reg-

ister, such a designation could help with obtaining funding for the project.

As of Monday afternoon, Stillson said, no additional major discovery had been made. "We're pretty much finding what we expected," he said.

This portion of the dig includes an expansion off the westerly edge of the site, where the two major finds were uncovered in December.

The dig will also extend in a southerly direction where archaeologists suspect evidence of a pre-historic wetland. Stillson hopes to establish a better un-

derstanding of the relationship between that wetland and the site.

A third edge of the original excavation will also be explored.

This second chapter of discovery will close the Friday before Memorial Day in preparation for the onslaught of beach-goers. Stillson said the group would be back during the summer, using remote sensory instruments to discover, among other things, the extent of the site.

"Hopefully," he said, "we'll be able to discover if there are any more living surfaces."

He thinks there are. ■